To: Enck, Judith[Enck.Judith@epa.gov]
Cc: Spalding, Curt[Spalding.Curt@epa.gov]
From: Szaro, Deb
Sent: Fri 10/14/2016 1:35:59 PM
Subject: Re: PFOA/PFOS Clips

Thanks Judith. The story on VT and the one on China were very interesting.

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 14, 2016, at 8:26 AM, Enck, Judith <Enck.Judith@epa.gov> wrote:

See Vermont story

Subject: PFOA/PFOS Clips

Cuomo, take command of water crisis

By Alex Beauchamp, Commentary

Published 3:35 pm, Wednesday, October 12, 2016

Times Union

How long is too long to drink tainted water?

The residents of Hoosick Falls, a small New York town near the Vermont border, drank poisoned water for 14 months after state government officials knew it was contaminated with dangerous chemicals. The people who live there were failed by public officials, including members of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration.

Instead of acting to rectify their error, state officials used recent public hearings as an opportunity to play the blame game, saying the real problem was with the federal government agency that was advising them to issue a health warning.

The people of Hoosick Falls weren't buying it, and neither should anyone else. We should demand action and accountability.

Hoosick Falls residents are suffering with elevated levels of perfluorooctanoic acid in their bloodstream, which puts them at greater risk of cancer and other health ailments. The likely culprit is a plant in town that manufactured products that included nonstick coating.

To hear the state government tell it, they were on the case. In February, Cuomo claimed, "We have been very active in Hoosick Falls from day one." That simply wasn't true. State officials waited well over a year after the first discovery of contamination to warn local residents to avoid drinking their water.

That is scandalous. But it gets even worse. The Cuomo administration resisted issuing this alert, even after federal regulators at the Environmental Protection Agency warned New York's senior health department officials that people in Hoosick Falls must be told their drinking water contained dangerous levels of PFOA.

So how can the Cuomo administration pretend that it acted responsibly? The people of Hoosick Falls, and all New Yorkers, deserve a real answer. But getting administration officials to explain themselves has been difficult. After months of pressure, state legislators agreed to hold public hearings. But after three such events, we still don't have a satisfactory answer to the most basic questions, and the Cuomo administration is sticking by its bogus blame-the-EPA story.

In a particularly ludicrous exchange at the second hearing in Albany, Department of Health Commissioner Howard Zucker was unable to tell legislators whether it was the right call to finally warn Hoosick Falls residents not to drink their poisoned water. This doesn't exactly inspire confidence that the state is well prepared for the next drinking water crisis.

And that crisis might come sooner than we think. Since the bad news about Hoosick Falls broke, other communities nearby are reporting elevated levels of

PFOA in their water systems. And new research shows that the problem with PFOA contamination is much broader, potentially affecting drinking water of millions of Americans in more than a dozen states.

It is clear that we need a comprehensive plan to deal with water contamination from PFOA and similar chemicals. It must start with an aggressive plan for the residents of Hoosick Falls, Petersburgh, Newburgh and other communities that are already suffering. The state must commit to ongoing biomonitoring — including blood testing — for those affected. And the state should make clear that long-term testing be paid for by the corporate polluters.

We owe it to the people who are suffering to come up with a real plan to solve our drinking water crisis. For that to happen, Cuomo must show real leadership. Is he up to it?

Alex Beauchamp is the Northeast region director at Food & Water Watch.

"Mothers of Flint" visit N.Y. poisoned water village

By Mark Gruenberg

October 12, 2016

People's World

HOOSICK FALLS, N.Y. (PAI) — It isn't just lead in the water and it isn't just in Flint. And that's the message of a group of mothers, led by a union teacher from the poisoned Michigan city, are taking on the road.

Darlene McClendon, a leader of the United Teachers of Flint, the AFT local there, brought that warning to a forum in Hoosick Falls, N.Y., a small village in northeastern Rensselaer County bisected by the Hoosic River. It's on the edge of the Albany metro area.

It was also the first stop in the “Mothers of Flint” tour, on Oct. 6, AFT reported. It won’t be the last.

That’s because instances of water contamination, thanks to corporate greed, political inattention or worse, are sprouting nationwide, from the libraries of Washington, D.C., to the schools of Portland, Ore.

“Word spread like wildfire throughout the city” of Flint, McClendon told the forum at Hoosick Falls, about the lead-contaminated water spurting from faucets and taps. And her students, elementary-schoolers, would ask her: “Am I going to die?”

Lead in water causes irreversible brain damage, behavior and learning problems, and that’s what happened in the majority-minority city of Flint after a state-GOP-named “czar” took over an allegedly financially failing government and vowed to save money.

One way he did so was to switch the city’s water source to the polluted Flint River without installing needed filters and devices to keep lead in Flint’s aging water pipes from leaching into the water people drank, used and bathed in.

In the three years since the switch, McClendon told the group that a majority of her students have developed aggressive behavior, nervousness and attention deficit disorder. Behavior and learning problems are just several side effects of exposure to lead.

But the water problem in Hoosick Falls, an overwhelmingly white village of a few thousand people – one third of them parents with children under the age of 18 – isn’t lead. It’s another chemical: PFOA.

PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) found in the drinking water in Hoosick Falls,

suppresses the human immune system. Federal studies identify it as a possible cancer-causing substance. It also upsets the human hormone system and can produce thyroid problems and lymphoma.

As a result of the PFOA in the water – caused by two big nearby manufacturing plants, run by Honeywell and Saint Gobain—the Hoosick Falls residents, like those in Flint, now are scared of their tap water and have been told not to use it. They too have to find and transport jugs of fresh water for their children's baths, for cleaning fruit and vegetables and to cook.

Chemistry teacher Brian Van Arsdale, president of the Hoosick Falls Teachers Association, told AFT he remembers a student brought him a letter his family received from the local water department explaining PFOA was in the water. To answer the student's question about "What does this mean?" Van Arsdale and his colleagues in the school's science department researched the issue, and they were horrified.

"The next day in class, I told all my students to stop drinking the water," he said.

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation sets an "acceptable" PFOA water contamination level of 70 parts per trillion. Other states' acceptable levels are 20 parts or fewer. Testing of students showed some Hoosick Falls water had 120 parts/trillion of PFOA.

The Hoosick Falls contamination has already drawn attention from the state government, including legislation against further water pollution.

Robert Allen, Hoosick Falls' secondary schools' band teacher, said the town suffered "a loss of innocence. You can't undo what you've learned. It has profoundly changed us." And Hoosick Falls mothers talked about the illness and loss from poisoned water.

Michelle Baker told her 14-year-old daughter they were safe because they had a well and didn't depend on the town's water supply. Wrong. The PFOA was in the ground water – and the well water – too. The contamination, she said, came from the Saint Gobain plant.

"I was a teacher for many years. We always worried about bullies," said New York State United Teachers Executive Vice President Andy Pallotta. "I think we have a couple of bullies here." He pledged continued union support, promising: "We can change things." NYSUT is the combined AFT-NEA union in the Empire State.

"These moms fight like wolverines every day," Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin, R-Troy, told AFT. He claims state officials withheld information and failed to follow U.S. Environmental Protection Agency guidelines to protect residents from cancer-causing water. "This is a form of corporate bullying and government bullying," he told panelists.

NYSUT, the New York State Nurses Association and the Auto Workers support the probe of what happened in Hoosick Falls – and what to do about it. The UAW members had been working in the Honeywell plant in nearby Green Island, making airplane brake pads. The firm has locked them out in a contract dispute.

Susan Brennan was pregnant while she worked at Honeywell. Her son has elevated levels of lead and delayed responses to sound. "Honeywell needs to be accountable," she said. The firm "used to take barrels of resin and throw them out back in Green Island."

The battle for accountability for PFOA contamination includes lobbying for money for medical care and for regular, free testing for life – similar to demands by the mothers of Flint.

Liza Frenette of NYSUT Communications provided most of the material for this story.

Vermont DEC geologists work to build 3D map for PFOA contamination

By Rachel Yonkunas

Published: October 12, 2016, 4:00 pm | Updated: October 12, 2016, 5:35 pm

News 10 ABC

BENNINGTON, Vt. (NEWS10) — A Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation geologist is gathering data to help build a 3D map of the ground underneath Bennington.

How is PFOA contamination moving through groundwater, and where may it turn up next? That's what a Vermont DEC geologist and his team are in the process of finding out by piecing together a 3-D map of the ground beneath Bennington that may lead to clean water sources.

A probe is going some 340 feet underground, surveying the conditions of a contaminated private well.

Deep underground, Vermont DEC geologist Jon Kim is searching for answers about groundwater contaminated with PFOA. More than 250 private wells in Bennington are contaminated at wildly different levels.

Bit by bit, Kim and his team will piece together a 3-D map of the bedrock aquifer underneath Bennington.

"When you think about all these different data sets, we're putting this together to try to understand how groundwater and the contaminant is moving around in the subsurface," Kim said.

They are using geophysical tools to survey Wayne Kachmar's well. Measuring temperature, conductivity, and bedrock formation are clues that may explain why Kachmar's well showed PFOA levels of 760 ppt and counting, while his neighbor's well was non-detect.

"It was a shock to see it go up 100 parts per trillion each month," Kachmar said. "The more information we get, the better off we're all going to be because the goal of this is to find places we can hopefully sink a well and have clean water."

If Kim and his team can trace the path of contamination, the map may also lead them to clean water sources.

"If groundwater is carrying contamination with it, we want to be able to think about what direction is this moving," Kim said. "So the ability to do some kind of prediction I think is really important."

The crew plans to do this to about a dozen more wells, but this is only phase one of the aquifer characterization.

They plan to complete this part of the project by the end of the year, and once all of their data is collected, they will be compiling that information to build the 3-D underground map.

China's emission of toxic fluorinated chemicals highest in the world

Date:October 12, 2016

Science Daily

Source:Örebro Universitet Summary

:China is today the largest emitter of certain toxic fluorinated chemicals in the world, researchers show after measuring the levels of 12 fluorinated substances at the mouths of 19 Chinese rivers. Share:

China is today the largest emitter of certain toxic fluorinated chemicals in the world, as presented in a new study published in Environmental

"Our field measurements have confirmed the theoretical calculations of emissions," says Thanh Wang, researcher at Örebro University who led the research project.

Researchers from Sweden, Norway and China have measured the levels of 12 fluorinated substances at the mouths of 19 Chinese rivers. They studied two fluorinated substances in particular, PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonate) and PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid). PFOS is used, for example, in the manufacturing of insecticides and chrome plating. PFOA is used in the manufacturing of PTFE, a coating material used for non-stick kitchen utensils and frying pans (commercially known as Teflon).

"We have previously shown that the manufacture of PTFE is the main source of PFOA in the environment," says Ian Cousins, Professor at Stockholm University and co-author of the study.

Research has shown that this group of chemicals is harmful to animals and humans.

There are explanations for the high levels in the Chinese estuaries: "Chemical manufacturers in the US and Europe have phased out local production, and instead moved its manufacturing to China, since regulations are less strict

there," says Thanh Wang, pointing out at the same time that emissions from the West have been "extremely high" in the past.

The researchers have also measured F-53B levels in Chinese rivers, a substance used as an alternative to PFOS, mainly in chrome plating.

"More studies are underway. There are signs that F-53B may be even more hazardous than PFOS, but so far its use has been relatively limited," says Thanh Wang.

The use of PFOS is regulated by the Stockholm Convention which aims to limit the spread of persistent organic pollutants. PFOS was banned in the EU in 2008, and major manufactures in the US have agreed to stop using PFOA.

"We have provided strong evidence that China is the largest emitter of all these substances in the world today, and that they are discharged into the oceans of the world. Our study forms the basis for further research and can provide help in aligning international regulations," says Thanh Wang.

"Toxic fluorinated chemicals substances are not only China's problem. They are a global, long-term pollution problem," says Ian Cousins, and points out that PFOA will probably be included in the Stockholm Convention soon.

The research project is a collaboration between Örebro University, Stockholm University, the Norwegian Institute for Air Research, and the Chinese Research Centre for Eco-Environmental Sciences, and was co-funded by the Norwegian Research Council and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Story Source: